CABE-SUGGESTED POLICY REPLACEMENT

1316P
~4118.15P
~~4218.15P~~
5131.92P

PERSONNEL

~~CIVILITY/RESPECTFUL COMMUNICATIONS AND ACTIONS~~

WORKPLACE BULLYING

The purpose of this policy is to promote a healthy, positive workplace climate so that every individual is able to contribute fully to our educational community. Every person has the right to dignity at work. The rights and responsibilities described in this policy apply to all employees, parents, and all who utilize or visit District facilities.

The Board requires all of its employees to treat all other employees, as well as students, with dignity and respect. Building principals and supervisory staff need to be sensitive to signs of stress among staff. During periods of high stress, staff may be observed acting in an unprofessional manner with each other. Unprofessional behavior must be dealt with, and not ignored. Further, rudeness will not be tolerated among the staff.

Consequences of Bullying in the Workplace

The Board of Education (Board) does not condone bullying in the workplace. Workplace bullying is antithetical to maintaining a congenial and healthy workplace. The Board desires to provide a workplace that is free from violence, harassment, intimidation, and other disruptive behavior.

Definitions

"**Workplace bullying**" is defined as the deliberate, hurtful, repeated mistreatment of an employee, driven by a desire to abuse or control that individual. Some of the most common bullying behaviors include yelling, shouting, and screaming; hostile glares and other intimidating gestures; "behind-the-back" put-downs, insults, and unfair criticism; and the deliberate sabotage and undermining of another individual's work performance.

"Mobbing" is a particular type of bullying behavior carried out by a group rather than by an individual. Mobbing is the bullying or social isolation of a person through collective unjustified accusations, humiliation, general harassment or emotional abuse. Although it is group behavior, specific incidents such as an insult or a practical joke may be carried out by an individual as part of mobbing behavior.

Examples of Bullying in the Workplace

Inappropriate behavior includes actions that intimidate, offend, degrade or humiliate a worker, which at times can occur in the presence of co-workers, students, parents, contractors or visitors to the school or school activities. The Board believes that:

- Bullies can be supervisors, subordinates, co-workers, and colleagues;
- Bullies often operate within the established rules and policies of their organization; and
- The damage that such actions cause, both to the targeted employee and to workplace morale, is significant.

The Board believes it is necessary to maintain a congenial, healthy and supportive workplace in order to avoid institutional bullying. Institutional bullying is when bullying becomes entrenched in an organization and becomes accepted as part of the workplace culture.

Reporting of Workplace Bullying/Procedures

Employees who believe they have been subjected to workplace bullying should report to the Building Principal/Superintendent of Schools in writing. The report should include details of the date, time, place and the specific conduct which occurred. The Building Principal/Superintendent or his/her designee will seek to maintain confidentiality while investigating the incident(s) but may discuss the situation with other supervisors/administrators or, if deemed necessary, with the Chairperson of the Board, via the Superintendent of Schools. The District will implement appropriate remedial measures. Disciplinary action may be taken if the severity of the workplace bullying makes that intervention appropriate. While investigating and responding to the prohibited misconduct, the Principal/Superintendent, or his/her designee, will give priority to avoiding possible retaliation or reprisals, while restoring and maintaining a congenial and healthy workplace.

At times, incidents of workplace bullying can be handled effectively in an informal manner. If an incident occurs that is offensive, it may be sufficient to explain clearly to the offender that the behavior is unacceptable. If the circumstances are too difficult or embarrassing for an individual, support may be sought from another colleague, a contact person, staff representative or an administrator. A complaint may decide, for whatever reason, to bypass the informal procedure and proceed to the filing of a written complaint.

For an individual to allege a policy violation, to call it bullying according to this policy's standard, the targeted individual must be able to demonstrate that due to the alleged bullying activity that he/she has experienced negative consequences which are affecting their ability to perform his/her job. It is the intent of this policy that such issues are identified early by the targeted individual, a co-worker or colleague, and the issue is resolved at the earliest possible stage.

Related Considerations

Bullying must not be confused with the non-abusive exercise of management rights to assign tasks, coach, and reprimand or take disciplinary actions against employees. Any administrator, supervisor or individual in a position of leadership to whom a complaint is reported (verbally or in writing) must take appropriate action according to internal procedures. Failure to comply may result in disciplinary action.

Freedom from retaliation is protected under this policy. Retaliation is a separate offense from the original claim of bullying. Protected individuals include complainants, or anyone who testifies, assists, or participates in any manner in an investigation or proceeding, internal or external, pertaining to the allegation of bullying.

Misuse of the policy is a violation of the policy itself.

This policy supplements but does not replace the District's policies pertaining to discrimination and harassment.

(cf. 0521 – Nondiscrimination)
(cf.1316 – Conduct on School Property)
(cf. 4118.11/4218.11 – Nondiscrimination)
(cf. 4118.112/4218.112 – Sexual Harassment)
(cf. 4118.13/4218.13 – Conflict of Interest)
(cf. 4118.211 – Retaliation and Whistle-Blowing)
(cf. 4118.24/4218.24 – Staff/Student Relations)
(cf. 5131.911 – Bullying)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

10-221 Boards of education to prescribe rule(s), policies, and procedures.

10-238 Petition for hearing by board of education.

Purpose

The Colchester Board of Education promotes civility and respectful communications among district employees, students, parents and the public. In the interest of presenting all adults as positive role models for students, the Colchester Board of Education encourages positive communication and discourages harassing, defamatory, obscene, abusive, discriminatory or threatening communication or actions, some of which may be against the law.

The intent of this policy is to maintain a civil, respectful workplace for teachers, students, administrators, staff, parents and other members of the school community.

The following describes expected standards for staff, students, parents and members of the public while at school, on school property or at a school function.

Standards for Communications

The Board expects staff, students, parents and members of the public while at school, on school property or at a school function to communicate and act in a manner that promotes respect for the dignity and worth of all individuals, regardless of race, religion, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, age, disability, pregnancy, gender identity or expression, socio-economic status, or role within the school community. All adults participating in the school community are expected to communicate and act in a manner that consistently provides positive role models for students. The Board will regulate communications and actions by staff, students, parents and members of the public while at school, on school property or at a school function, when such communications or actions are contrary to these fundamental principles.

Specifically, the Board will regulate disruptive communications and/or actions by members of the school community that:

1. interfere, disrupt or undermine the effective operation of the school district;
2. are used to engage in harassing, defamatory, obscene, abusive, discriminatory or threatening or similarly inappropriate communications;
3. create a hostile work environment;
4. breach confidentiality obligations of school district employees; or
5. violate the law, board policies and/or other school rules and regulation.

Examples of Disruptive Communications/Actions

Disruptive Communications/Actions include, but are not limited to:

- Using loud and/or offensive language (for example, swearing or display of temper).
- Invading another person's space by moving close to the individual in an aggressive manner.
- Threatening to do physical harm to a teacher, school administrator, school employee, student or member of the community.
- Damaging, destroying or threatening to destroy or damage school property.
- Harassing, defamatory, obscene, abusive, discriminatory or threatening verbal, written or electronic communications.
- Any other behavior which disrupts the orderly operation of the school, a school activity, or any other activity sponsored by the school district.

Student, Parent, Member of the Public Resources

Any employee, parent, or member of the public who believes he/she was subject to disruptive communications and/or actions on the part of a staff member should bring such behavior to the to the attention of the building principal and/or the Superintendent's office.

Disciplinary Consequences

Employees found to be in violation of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action. Students found to be in violation of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the Board's policy concerning Student Discipline.

Parents or other members of the school community found to be in violation of this policy may be directed to leave school property, a school building, or any activity sponsored by the school district. Repeat violations may result in a long-term denial of access to school property, school buildings, or activities sponsored by the school district.

Policy Adopted: October 14, 2014
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COLCHESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Colchester, Connecticut